

**TRADITIONAL AND FORMAL EDUCATION: MEANS OF IMPROVING
GRASSCUTTER FARMING IN OGUN WATERSIDE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE, NIGERIA.**

BY

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Abstract

The study assessed the role of traditional and formal education as a means of improving the productivity and socio-economic status of grasscutter farmers in Ogun Waterside Local Government Area of Ogun State. One hundred respondents were randomly selected and interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. The data generated were analyzed and presented through descriptive statistics. The results showed that success in grasscutter rearing is determined to a large extent, by the quantum of information available to the farmers. Sixty (60%) of the respondents strongly agreed that education (formal or informal) has a significant relationship with production level. Inadequate extension personnel, high level of illiteracy and transportation problems among others are the major constraints that impede production of grasscutters in the study area. The study concludes that both traditional and non-formal education are important for the development and efficiency of grasscutter farming in Ogun Waterside local Government Area of Ogun State. The following are the recommendations of the study: revision of the curriculum of formal schools to include items that inculcate bio-diversity conservation into young people's minds; traditional education in local communities that lays emphasis on conservation of wildlife; Government and non-governmental organizations should be more committed to funding education/research on biodiversity conservation.

Key words: Traditional and Formal Education, School Curriculum, Grasscutter, Socio-economic Status.

Introduction

In the history of the world, prominence has been given to education because it is believed that the development and civilization of any nation or group of people is completely hinged on the quality of education of such a nation or group of people. The importance of education lies in the fact that it is at the centre of national development (Ijaduola, 1998). It develops the nation by developing individuals and

every facet of human endeavor, including biodiversity conservation. A well developed educational system will not only lead to the production of trained and skilled manpower, but will also contribute substantially to the realization of the objectives of the government when skilled manpower produced, brings about social change and transformation of the economy.

Traditional education or indigenous education is an education that is transferable from the parent to the offspring in a non-formal environment while formal or Western education is carried out under a formal setting (Ijaduola, 1998).

According to Onadeko (2004), education plays a major role in bringing about effective management and use of natural resources, thus improving the socio-economic status of farmers in general and grasscutter farmers in particular, through both traditional and formal education.

From previous studies, it has been established that only about 10% of the protein requirement of the nation is being produced from livestock in the country leaving a shortfall of very broad 90%, for the requirement to be met (Atsu,2002) therefore, there is need for conservation of the nation's wildlife resources in which cane rat, actually known as "cutting grass" instead of the popular grasscutter (*thryonomys Sunderianus* Temmick) could serve as a supplementary source of the available protein in the country (FAO, 2006, Abioye, 2010).

Traditional and Western education have been exerting profound influence on conservation of wildlife resources, including grasscutter. The traditional conservation method has been largely entrenched in many communities due to outstanding impact of the traditional education. Every locality has sets of traditional conservation laws and regulations commonly referred to as taboos, aimed at allowing the earth to continually replenish itself (Hagan, 1997;Jayeoba and Adebambo,2009). Similarly, through formal education, awareness about the relevant knowledge and skills required for good management of grasscutter rearing are brought to the door steps of farmers; this without doubt, will impact positively on their production capacity/efficiency (Abioye, 2010).

In view of the significant influence of both indigenous and formal education on rearing of grasscutter, this study was conducted to evaluate the capacity of traditional and formal education as means of improving the production efficiency of grasscutter farmers in Ogun Waterside Local Government Area of Ogun State. A major thrust of the study was to identify the various constraints militating against the rearing of grasscutter in the study area.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Ogun Waterside Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of grasscutter farmers. To ensure

adequate representative samples, the study area was divided into four Zones which were cardinally and evenly distributed within the Local Government Area thus:

Zone A – Iwopin, Zone B – Ayila, Zone C – Apata, Zone D – Abigi.

A total of one hundred grasscutter farmers (25 farmers per Zone) were selected and interviewed with semi-structured interview schedule to elicit information on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, sources of information on rearing of grasscutter, educational background and constraints to production, etc. The data collected were subjected to simple descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

It is very vivid across the zones (Table 1) that more people under 30 years of age are engaged in grasscutter farming, closely followed by people within 31 – 40 years of age. This is the working population who are still very active and daring. The youthful curiosity and adventurous nature often place emphasis on this age group in ventures like grasscutter domestication. It is also evident that more males are engaged in grasscutter rearing than females. The possible reason for this may be that females are usually afraid of rodents especially when it comes to handling live animals. However, it is not only females that exhibit this phobia for animals; some men also show traces of fear when handling live grasscutters.

Zone B and D (Ayila and Abigi) recorded one hundred percent (100%) male involvement in grasscutter farming. This shows that males in Zone B and D are involved in grasscutter farming than their counterparts in Zone A and C. the need to provide additional protein through livestock farming to meet the required quantity for the family may be responsible for this and since men are the head of the family and are directly in charge of ensuring household food security; both in qualitative and quantitative terms, this picture will always persist.

The educational background of the respondents showed that grasscutter farmers, were mostly secondary school certificate holders, closely followed by those with elementary education and the least are those that obtained tertiary education. it is very evident here that education has been a tool through which many people got involved in grasscutter rearing across the zones. The study revealed that more people got to know objectively about grasscutter rearing through their interaction with each other and vocational training (traditional education) in the family set up. Also, a reasonable percentage of grasscutter farmers are at vantage position of rearing because of their having acquired formal education and knowledge acquired through other media like Radio and Television.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Age Range (Years)	Zone A Iwopin Freq. (%)	Zone B Ayila Freq. (%)	Zone C Apata Freq. (%)	Zone D Abigi Freq. (%)	Total Freq. (%)
21 – 30	15 (60.00)	17 (68.00)	13 (52.00)	19 (76.00)	64 (64.00)
31 – 40	6 (24.00)	3 (12.00)	7 (28.00)	4 (16.00)	20 (20.00)
41 – 50	4 (16.00)	5 (20.00)	4 (16.00)	2 (8.00)	15 (15.00)
51 & Above	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.00)
Sex					
Male	19 (76.00)	25 (100.00)	24 (96.00)	25 (100.00)	93 (93.00)
Female	6 (24.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (7.00)
Education background					
Elementary school	3 (12.00)	13 (52.00)	12 (48.00)	7 (28.00)	35 (35.00)
Secondary school	12 (48.00)	10 (40.00)	9 (36.00)	10 (40.00)	41 (41.00)
Tertiary Education	1 (4.00)	2 (8.00)	4 (16.00)	8 (32.00)	24 (24.00)
Sources of information grasscutter husbandry					
Formal school and media	13 (52.00)	6 (24.00)	9 (36.00)	10 (40.00)	38 (38.00)
Socialization and vocational training	12 (48.00)	19 (76.00)	16 (64.00)	15 (60.00)	6 (62.00)

Source: Field survey, 2011

*Percentage values are in bracket

Influence of Traditional and Western Education on Production Capacity of Grasscutter farmers across the Zones

As regard influence of both traditional and formal education on rearing of grasscutter Table 2 unfolded the fact that both systems of education (traditional and formal) have a pronounced or significant influence on production capacity/efficiency of the grasscutter farmers. This revealed in the area of availability and accessibility of needed information for training, effective management and skill acquisition for maximum production of grasscutter. Table 2 further presents the observable results from the field as regards the influence of both traditional and western education on grasscutter farming. The importance of modern information and formal or western education cannot be overemphasized in grasscutter domestication and wildlife conservation in general due to the dynamism of knowledge (Boateng, 2005).

Table 2: influence of Traditional and Western Education on Production Capacity of Grass cutter Farmers across the Zones

Type of Education	Zone Iwopin	A Zone B Ayila	Zone C Apata	Zone D Abigi	Total
	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %	Freq. %
Traditional Education	18 (72.00)	2 (8.00)	11 (4.00)	7 (28.00)	38 (38.00)
Western Education (formal)	7 (28.00)	23 (92.00)	14 (56.00)	18 (72.00)	62 (62.00)
Total					100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Respondents' Constraints to Grasscutter farming.

Grasscutter farming in the study area associated with some challenges. The major constraints militating against effective and profitable production of grasscutters in Ogun Waterside Local government Area of Ogun State (as revealed in Table 3) are marketing problems, insufficient extension personnel, poor storage facilities, illiteracy, natural disasters and inaccessibility of production area. This result is in agreement with that of Owen and Dike (2012) who pointed out similar aforementioned constraints in their review of the potentialities, opportunities and challenges confronting grasscutter farming in Nigeria.

This result also is in tandem with that of Ewebiyi (2014) who submitted that constraints may hinder meaningful effective engagement in livelihood activities of both non-farm and agricultural based with resultant effect of low productivity, income and improved well being.

This result implies that constraints faced by respondents may pose a threat to effective engagement and profitable grasscutter farming the study area.

Table 3: Respondents' Constraints Militating against Grasscutter Farming.

Factors	Not a Constraint	Minor Constraint	Major Constraint
Insufficient extension personnel	4 (4.00)	6 (6.00)	90 (90.00)
Illiteracy	3 (3.00)	17 (17.00)	80 (80.00)
Inaccessibility of the production area	10 (10.00)	28 (28.00)	62 (62.00)
Political instability	46 (46.00)	52 (52.00)	2 (2.00)
Marketing problem	6 (6.00)	3 (3.00)	91 (91.00)
Natural disaster	20 (20.00)	16 (16.00)	64 (64.00)
Poor storage facilities	5 (5.00)	7 (7.00)	88 (88.00)
Transportation problem	20 (20.00)	14 (14.00)	66 (66.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2011

*Figures in brackets are percentages

Conclusion Recommendation

Both traditional and non-formal education are important for the development and better efficiency in grasscutter farming in Ogun Waterside Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. It is recommended that the curriculum of formal schools should be revised to include items that will inculcate bio-diversity conservation into young people's minds; traditional education in local communities should be encouraged to lay emphasis on conservation of wildlife; and government and non-governmental organizations should be more committed to funding effective education/research on bio-diversity conservation.

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